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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Liberal International (World Liberal Union), a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 May 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Protection and Promotion of the Human Rights of Migrants

Liberal International (LI) welcomes the Report on labor exploitation of migrants by the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights of Migrants, His Excellency Francois Crepeau, as submitted to the 26th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. LI fully aligns with the report's conclusions that "coherent and comprehensive gender-sensitive national migration policies have to be established in a way that they address all stages of the migration process, are coordinated across government and are developed in widespread consultation with national human rights institutions, the private sector, employers' and workers' organizations, civil society and migrants themselves, and with the support of international organizations."

LI also welcomes the eight-point agenda for action and the subsequent declaration adopted by the UN member states at the latest High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and fully aligns itself with the recommendations reached.

The protection and promotion of minority rights' lies at the heart of Liberal International's human rights agenda and as such the rights of migrants have been a significant part of the organization's human rights policy deliberations.

This statement would like to pay particular attention to the failure of the international community to adopt a comprehensive framework on global migration governance and on the steps needed in order to achieve progress in this direction.

Recognizing that:

- According to the IOM the number of international migrants worldwide has reached 232 million with migration flows continuously prevailing and also increasing
- According to the latest data provided by the World Bank remittances from migrants are now nearly three times greater than the world's combined foreign aid
- Migration is of great importance for the development of both the place of origin and destination
- International migration and asylum policy is by nature cross-border
- The most vulnerable persons in migration flows are women and children posing greater risks for abuse of their human rights thus reiterating the need to incorporate a gender perspective into national migration policies
- The integration of migrants into the civil society of their new environment, including but not limited to providing adequate access to healthcare and education facilities as well as to the labor market, is often hindered by discrimination based on gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, political and/or religious beliefs
- In terms of international migrants, there is often hidden bureaucratic and indirect political suppression of asylum seekers, by denying asylum due to the impossibility of documented proof of religious practice or sexual orientation
- A lack of respect for the human rights of migrants in the place of destination reduces their ability to contribute to the respective economic development and growth of the destination
- The deprivation of the human right to development is one of the very causes of migration itself making the inclusion of the human rights of migrants into the post-2015 Development Agenda ever so evident
- Many European countries are facing demographic changes as a result of aging populations and thereby potential challenges such as labor shortages, thus increasing the need to open up more regular migration channels
- There is an ever-urgent need to address conflict driven migration in light of the on-going humanitarian disaster facing Syrian refugees and the tragedy of the conflicts in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic among others
- There is an urgent need to address the core issues of economic and social-driven migration such as poverty, unemployment and the lack of a general prospect for a happy and fulfilling life

Expressing deep concern that:

- There are now 2.7 million registered Syrian refugees with at least $ 3.5 billion still needed in international humanitarian assistance, as stated by the UN Refugee Agency
- Strict visa requirements and heavy carrier sanctions have made the use of human traffickers and smugglers the only remaining resort for migrants to reach peaceful and democratic states, resulting in serious human tragedies

Stressing that:

- Migrants are entitled to fundamental human rights as guaranteed by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Commending on:

- The on-going efforts by liberals around the world to promote, protect and advance the rights of migrants such as:
    - The recent declaration on migration adopted by the Arab Alliance for Freedom and Democracy at a gathering for leaders of liberal political parties and organizations from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Netherlands, Palestine, Tunisia, Sudan, and the United Kingdom. The declaration calls for an improved treatment of illegal immigrants according to international conventions and human rights charters as well as for an increased Arab-European cooperation in the sectors of education, trade and investment as a way of reducing economic and social-driven migration to Europe
    - The report on "Migrants, Refugees and the Fight Against AIDS" by Doris Fiala MP, Vice-Chairperson of the Alliance for Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (CoE). The report was presented before the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons and it called on CoE member states to adopt human-rights based approach to fighting HIV/AIDS and to ensure that all migrants, including undocumented migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, have full access to affordable HIV treatment and care and to adapted prevention strategies.
    - The multi-stakeholder strategy plan looking into how governments, civil society organizations, and trade unions can work together in implementing the ASEAN Declaration on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers adopted by the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats
    - The Alliance for Liberal and Democrats for Europe "EU 2020" Strategy which recommends a change in the EU's immigration policy in light of the decline in the percentage of the EU's working age population and calls for the use of the European Blue Card as an instrument to take an active stake in the global war for talent

Liberal International Recalls:

- Its Resolution on "Women, Population, Changing Demographics and Migration" adopted by the 176th LI Executive Committee in Manila, the Philippines which called for greater efforts to create jobs and sustainable means of life in developing countries so that citizens of such countries do not feel compelled to migrate
- Its Resolution on "Migration and Asylum Policy" adopted by the 178th LI Executive Committee in Cancun, Mexico which called for all countries to implement visa requirements that enable free and easy travel as a rule rather than an exception
- Its Resolution on "Migration and Integration" as adopted by the 57th LI Congress in Manila, the Philippines which called for more generous national migration systems, through which both skilled and unskilled workers are allowed to seek work as economic immigrants

Liberal International Calls On:

- All UN member states to actively implement the Declaration adopted at the latest High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, including in the discussions concerning the Post-2015 Development Agenda
- All UN member states to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
- All UN member states to pay full respect to the Geneva Convention of 1951, guaranteeing the universal right to seek asylum and to refrain from any legislation or measures that may restrict the right to asylum or international human rights standards
- The United Nations to create a comprehensive global agency on migration in order to streamline the different institutional approaches and normative frameworks currently in place dealing with the issue
- Migration-destination countries to further enable migration for reasons other than asylum-seeking in order to foster an inclusive economic globalization and secure individual opportunities for everyone
- The international community to work together with political internationals in order to promote and advance sensible migration policies guaranteeing fair treatment before the law and effectively preventing human rights abuses towards migrants

Liberal International Commits:

- For liberal parliamentarians from around the world, whether in government or opposition, to continue to work towards a comprehensive framework on global migration governance in consultation with national and international human rights institutions, the civil society sector, and migrants themselves
- For its liberal member parties to continue to safeguard the rights of asylum seekers, especially those belonging to relatively suppressed societal groups due to their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and/or political and religious beliefs
- For its liberal member parties to work towards the development and implementation of clear migration integration strategies so that immigrants realize their full potential for their own benefit and the benefit of the hosting country
- To engage in extensive dialogue and to support the work of the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights of Migrants and all other relevant UN agencies and bodies which address the human rights of migrants